If the Government should commandeer produce during the first three years, it would give an undertaking to pay not less than 70s. for wheat, and 45s. for oats; while for potatoes it would pay not less than £8 per ton in 1917 and £7 per ton in 1918 and 1919.

We further decided that as a part of a policy of guaranteed prices, the Government should secure a *Minimum Wage* of £2 5s. a week* to agricultural labourers during the period of the *Wage* guarantee, and should make provision for *Boards* the establishment of Wage Boards; for compelling owners and tenants to make the best use of the land under their control; and for preventing rents being raised during the period of the State guarantee, except in special cases, e.g., where the landowner himself pays tithe, such special cases to receive the sanction of the Board of Agriculture.[39]

The powers were unprecedented and drastic. But so were the circumstances.

The policy outlined in these decisions: guaranteed prices; guaranteed wages; fixed rents; and compulsory powers to secure good cultivation, was the policy pursued thereafter by the Government in its treatment of the farming community. Fixed rents, guaranteed wages and compulsory efficient cultivation were always regarded as essential concomitants of guaranteed prices.

A very important further discussion took place

three days later, on iyth February. It was reported
that the farmers who had been consulted were willing
to pay a minimum wage of 253. a week, if they
were guaranteed a minimum price for their produce.

* The average wages of an agricultural labourer in England before the War ranged from izs. 6d. to i8s. a week. The general average can be put at about 148. a week.